M. KAPLAN DIARIES – TRANSCRIPTION

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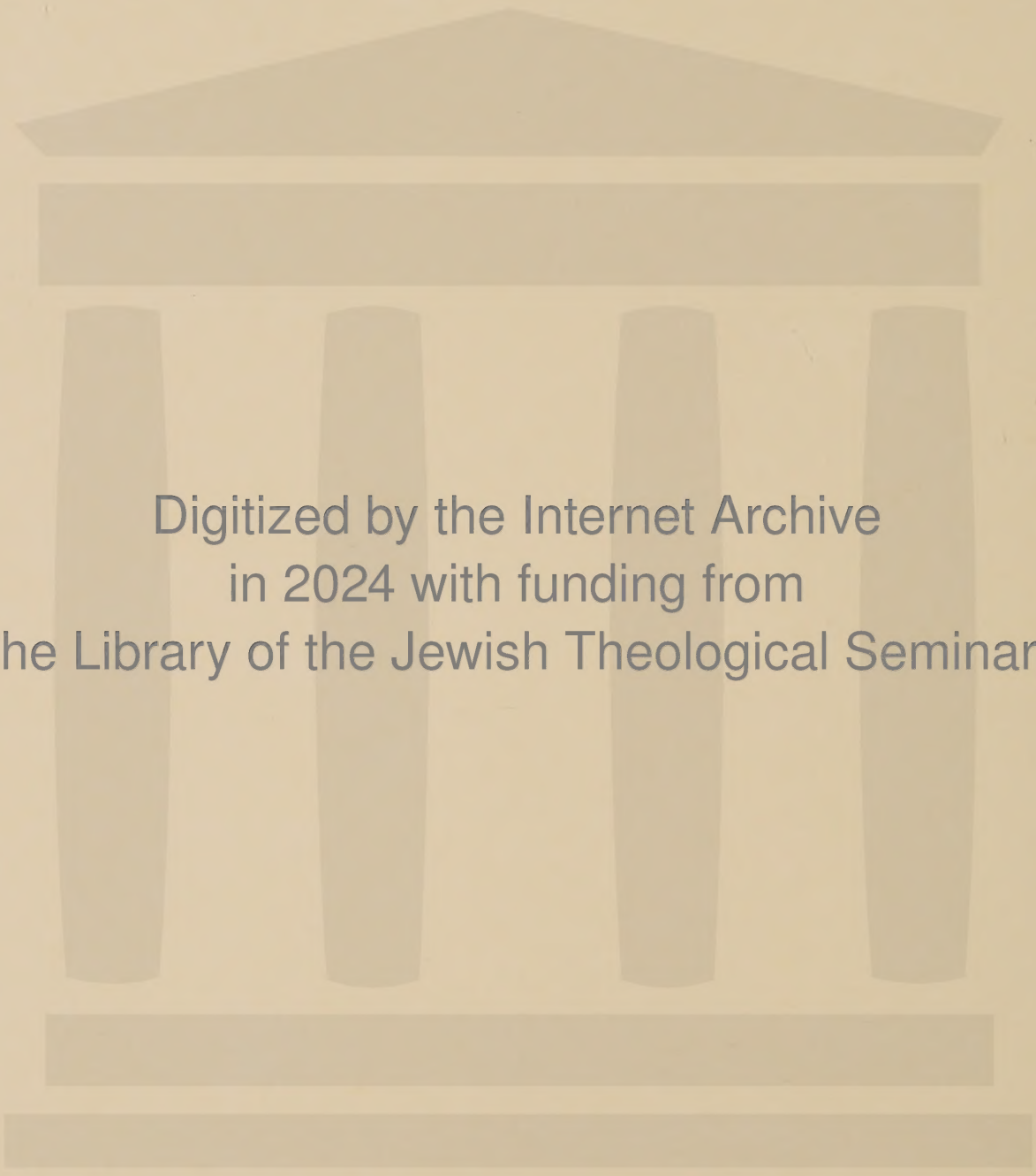
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our action that life is worthwhile and to avoid doing anything that might lead him to deny the worthwhileness of life.

Would it be correct then to distinguish soteric from magic religion by saying that the former type of or strand in religion has as its goal the attainment of life that is worthwhile, whereas the latter does not reckon with the worthwhileness of life as such?

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Tuesday, July 23, 1940

The category of worthwhileness of life seems to furnish a clue to the meaning of salvation, and whatever helps us to understand the meaning of salvation helps us understand the meaning of spirit. For spirit is the Power that makes for salvation. In other words spirit is God and God is spirit. But when we analyze the workings of the category of worthwhileness we enounter difficulties, analogous to those we encounter when we are inclined to identify conscience as the revelation of God in man, or as the manifestation of spirit. The conscience of the insensitive man, especially of the hardened wrong doer is easily satisfied, if he can be said to have any at all. It is in the good man that the conscience is easily aroused and is pained by the slightest misdeed. Hence the divine in man operates as a principle of suffering and punishment of the good man and does not seem to trouble the wicked. Likewise with the category of worthwhileness. Those whose mental horizon is narrow, or whose sympathies are dull apparently find life worthwhile when their physical needs are provided for, even though there is a great deal of wickedness and tragedy in the world, whereas those of broad sympathies and wide knowledge cannot be happy in such a world. The medieval theologians both Christian and Mohammedan could conceive God as taking delight in the eternal tortured of the damned, even of little children whom He assumedly had for no good reason condemned to such a fate. Only

obscene or insane minds could concot such a conception of God. (Thanked be the God of truth, Judaism in its most obscurantist theologians never sank to such depths!) But the normal human being cannot do other than conceive God as Himself suffering the eternal tortures of hell on account of all the cruelty and misery that prevail not only in human life but in all life. And yet despite these tortures Life not only goes on but grows in intensity. The intensity expresses itself both in struggle and cooperation. The very will-to-live is testimony to a sense of life's worthwhileness. What other creatures achieve unconsciously man has to achieve consciously, because of greater complexity and intensity of his mode of life. The salvation which man strives for is thus merely the achievement, on a level of awareness, of the worthwhileness of life despite the evils that beset it. Thus it is only on the assumption that in God both the sum total of all evil and the maximum affirmation of life's worthwhileness meet that we can understand the difference with respect to the category of life's worthwhileness between the good and the wicked. In the latter there is less of spirit or of God, hence there is less of sensitiveness to the pathos of evil and less of the affirmation of life's worthwhileness.

The foregoing makes it apparent that not the mere animal delight in living, the mere zest which comes with physical health or with the sense of triumph in a contest for power is what we should have in mind when we speak of life's worthwhileness. It does bespeak quite definitely a sense of triumph, but not in a contest for power or gain or fame, but over the forces of evil and suffering in oneself and in the world at large. They themselves may perhaps continue as of yore, but it is their inability to destroy the will-to-live that is here spoken of as triumph.

0 Only after having articulated this conception of salvation, I can understand the following in Nicolas Berdyaev's "Freedom and the Spirit" (p.39): "None of the attempts which have been made to base the certainty of a future life on the substantiality of the soul are at all convincing, nor can they bring us any real proof of it. They have their origin in the naturalist outlook upon the mysteries of the spiritual life, and life itself eludes this mode of thought. Human personality is immortal not because the human soul possesses substantiality, nor because the idea of personality necessarily involves the assumption that it is immortal, but because there is a spiritual experience of eternal life, because that spiritual life is divine-human...It is proved and demonstrated by the manifestation of immortality itself in the spiritual life. Immortality is indeed a spiritual and religious category, and not a category of rationalist metaphysics...The immortality of man is not a prolongation into infinity of his metaphysical nature; it is a rebirth into the higher life...It is eternal life which has conquered death. Immortality, that is, eternal life, is the revelation of the Kingdom of God and not merely another name for the metaphysical nature of being."

If the spiritual life is, as here assumed, the will-to-live self aware and intent upon the maximum of life, immortality is the affirmation of that will despite the dissolution of the particular body which happens to be the vessel in which the will-ti-live functioned for a time.

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What is the relation of the spirit to the cosmos? To speak of the cosmos as utterly indifferent to the spirit makes no sense. If we bear in mind that the cosmos does not mean just a blind meaningless something that exists yonder. Cosmos means a universe in

which the human mind has learned to discern relationships, order, beauty, power, and above all the unity of vast uniformities. The sub-human, or even the primitive human has no intimations of such a cosmos. The cosmos is the creation not of any particular human mind but of mind or spirit as it functions transcendentally. When we speak of the mind's or spirit's functioning in man, we naturally refer to man's will to live the life abundant. It is that will which was not satisfied with the immediate impressions it gathered in the course of its trying to live, and which aspired to more life through the medium of profounder and more extensive understanding of the environment both in space and time that has revealed to man the cosmos which is his habitat. Mind as such, that can free itself from subjective notions, assumes a kinship between itself and its creations, and abhors begetting/a universe that not only deny it but belie it, and declare it vanity and illusion. Since there is indeed such inherent kinship, then mind or spirit has good reason to feel itself at home in the cosmos, even though as it functions in man it has not yet reached the degree of reasoned articulation to be able to detail the arguments to warrant that feeling.

Atheism/is not only atheism; it is also acosmism and apsychism.

In order that there be no uncertainty as to the kind of life's worthwhileness is to serve as emotional criterion of salvation, we should specify it as that which is experienced in the fruitful striving after truth, goodness and beauty. There can be no question that it is the spirit which functions in such striving. It is not nature as ordinarily understood, i.e. nature, abstract, hypostatized and dehumanized or de-spiritualized.

What goodness means has been stated, viz: the synthesis of

maximum individuality with maximum cooperation. Truth may perhaps be defined as taking into account the principle of polarity in the attempt to understand reality. Beauty posits the involvement of the world of sound and sight and the disarmament of either harmony or sublimity in that world.

In all that has been said here about salvation being the objective of the will to live the life abundant, there is no intention to identify that will as a psychological category. The will to live is not viewed in this entire discussion externally but entirely from within, as the basic dynamic factor in all our thinking, feeling and acting, and as that with which we think, feel and act rather than as their object. As such the will to live is a distinctly religious category, i.e. as a category for helping us to identify the soul-self, God and salvation. An analogous error with regard to reason will illustrate the distinction between viewing the will to live as a psychological and viewing it as a religious category. Reason has been taken off its pedestal in which it was placed by philosophers and scientists and reduced to a psychologic function. Morris R. Cohen has a good deal to say in refutation of this tendency to psychologism. Once we treat reason merely as a psychologic function, we are left without any standard by which to determine the rightness or wrongness of anything and we land in mental anarchy. Instead, I prefer to view reason as an inherent trait of the will to live the life abundant and as having for its objective the attainment of truth. From that standpoint reason too is a religious category. By the same token, conscience should be viewed as a religious category, and likewise the esthetic judgment. (There ought to be a category for the appreciation and creation of beauty analogous to reason and conscience for truth and goodness respectively.)

In alluding to God as the Power that makes for salvation I do not identify myself with those who are known as "affirmative" theologians. On the contrary, it is the purpose of that definition to indicate that in our conception of God there are knowable and unknowable aspects. It would not do to reduce God entirely to unknowable or negative attributes. The knowability of God is not immediate. What we know immediately is selfhood. This selfhood furnishes us with adwquate symbolism to realize the meaning of Godhood. As an illustration take the expression "grasping an idea." The expression is a symbolic one. Negatively, it denies the failure to understand the idea. But what it means affirmatively is very difficult to state, because it is hard to describe what actually happens when we "grasp" an idea. But it would be ridiculous to transfer to the process of cognition what is only a physical concept and to judge by it the nature of the process. If we cannot describe even a thought process in affirmative terms, how do we expect to be able to describe the fundamental life process in itsentirety, which is God? In the same way, therefore, as we have to employ metaphorical representation to express the thought process, we have to employ mythological representations to express the God process. The religious interpretation of history cannot be regarded as ahard and fast recording of facts, like a scientific interpretation of historic events from an economic or sociologic standpoint. It is an imaginative construction of human events which have come to play a significant part in the life of a people, from the standpoint of their symbolization of the Divine Process. They have that symbolic significance only for the people to whom those events have become in some way significant. Those events, in turn, can be significant only to those who identify themselves with the particular people in whose career those events play an important role. In other words, each civiliza-

tion has its own mythology by which it symbolizes the Divine process in the world, as it has its own language by means of which it carries on its collective life.

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Wednesday, July 24, 1940

One of the important implications of the soteric approach to the belief in God is that reason cannot by itself prove the existence of God, much less help us to experience the reality of God. Salvation involves the whole of the will to live, and only through experiencing that will in its totality from within can we know what godhood means. Reason is the expression of only one aspect of the will to live and is inherently not qualified to articulate that will in its entirety. Reason is bound to the law of identity, or at least it was considered as so bound until Hegel came along and released it. It has become evident that it is impossible to exhaust the reality of any process, if we adhere to the law of identity, because all process is becoming, and becoming is a synthesis of being and non-being.

This is what mystic philosophers have all the time been trying to state in their opposition to the rationalist philosophers. The latter who derive their main inspiration from Aristotle have argued the possibility of finding ample demonstration of the existence and nature of God within the categories of reason. So far all they have succeeded in doing is either to land in contradictions or to arrive at conceptions of God which are merely verbalizations of our ignorance. Dualist theism, monistic pantheism, negative attributes leave us religiously and spiritually cold.

On the other hand, it is not at all necessary to resort to the befuddling terminology of mysticism in the effort to give expression to experiences which do not fall within the ordinary concepts of reason. And it is dangerous to disparage the function of reason in

checking the will extravagances of uncontrolled imagination. All that is necessary is to enlarge the scope of Reason to limits beyond the traditional categories. If honestly exercised, reason can be relied upon to know its own limitations. But even what it has to say negatively with regard to domains of life and being, beyond its purview, is of inestimable worth.

A practical problem of a very fundamental character is the one of esotericism vs. exotericism. If religion is to be a way of life and to constitute the focal point in the conscious phase of a civilization it must be the possession of the many. But the only way to have religion of any kind become the possession of the many is to prescribe certain forms of thinking as authoritative, because we cannot expect that the average person who has little time or capacity for religious thinking to arrive at objectively true conclusions, in the same way as he would on the whole in mathematics or physics. On the other hand, what becomes of spiritual freedom if we are to have authoritative forms of thinking? To have the few do all the religious thinking for the many cannot lead to a wholesome social life. Yet there is the inherent difficulty of having to communicate to the masses that interpretation of the belief in God which only those who have a knack for viewing life from within can grasp. Ordinarily the lay mind alternates between crass superstition and absolute negation between so-called common sense materialism and abstract and irrelevant conceptualism.

As a matter of fact, the crucial problem of human life is what to do with the mass mind. By that I mean two things: 1. How to get the average person to think at all, and once started, how to get it to think straight; 2. How to prevent even the intellectual

person from being swamped in his thinking by mass influence and propaganda. This is as much a problem in economics as it is in religion. But it is so complex a problem that the forces to deal with it would have to be infinitely greater than any of our Reconstructionist group could hope to command. We must confine ourselves to those who can be brought to understand the new approach to religion without great difficulty either on our part or on theirs, and let the rest take care of itself.

The Spirit reveals itself in the cosmos as nature, in society as the Kingdom of God, in the individual as salvation. The individual combines in himself the attributes of society and the cosmos. His body displays the attributes of the cosmos, his mind the attributes of society (memory and imagination which attain the level of reason and conscience. Spirit or God is the will to live. Nature is the myth which man fashions concerning his physical environment. That environment includes his body and extends to the furthest star. Into it he projects an order which is the creation of his reason (a phase of his will to live). History is to society what nature is to the cosmos. It too is a projection of order which is the creation of man's will to live. But in this projection not only reason but also conscience is involved. Salvation is the achieved goal which the will to live the life abundant projects into the future. God is the Power that makes for the attainment of that goal, but He reveals Himself in the actual striving toward that goal. "Reveal himself" is here synonimous with "is" but it expresses the additional fact that God's being is in the individual human being only to an infinetesimally small extent or degree.

Logically prior to believing in God as the Power that makes for salvation is to believe in man as capable of salvation. In ordinary parlance, this means having faith in man, believing that he possesses potentially at least what we usually term a higher nature than the beast. This doesnot necessarily mean that the human being viewed either physically or psychologically need be regarded as harboring that something which should give us reason to expect better things of him. We may even despair, if we view man merely as a creature of his nature, of his ever evincing any proof that he is generically different from other creatures. But if we can discern in man evidences of a higher order of being, despite their being overlaid with corruption and cruelty, then we can believe in God. But how can we ever discern any such evidences other than by discovering them in our own person. "There can be revealed to us only that which is revealed in us," says Berdyaev (Freedom and the Spirit, p.93) The first step, accordingly, in achieving faith in God is to learn to have faith in oneself.

This faith in oneself is not merely faith in one's ability to do things. The latter is necessary as a part of mental health, and is as important as bodily health. The faith in oneself which is not only a prerequisite of faith in God, but is in a sense faith in God, implies being able to identify in oneself a principle of life which is not a derivative from one's natural capacities, but which belongs to a different order of existence. In the yearning for salvation, for life's worthwhileness, for truth, goodness and beauty for their own sake, for freedom, justice and peace in society, man experiences something supra-human or supra-natural. One who experiences that yearning in himself cannot be so vain or unreasonable as to believe that he is alone in the possession of such yearning. The most difficult step in achieving faith in God is thus the first one of achieving faith in oneself. The rest follows easily.

This may throw light upon the sense of sin under which truly religious people seem to be forever laboring. As religious people they intuitively realize that they must identify in themselves some principle or urge which they can be certain of as revealing the divine. Otherwise they can have no faith in themselves, and not having faith in themselves, they are likely to lose faith in God. The trouble with ancient religion was that, though it knew how to direct man in search of some supra-human principle in himself, it did not furnish him with the proper criteria of what he should consider as a principle of that kind. It taught man to strive for salvation, but it had little knowledge of what salvation consisted in. Without minimizing the contribution of ancient religion to the spiritual life of man, it is evident that unless we had benefited by the cumulative wisdom of mankind especially during modern times, we would have continued to grope even more than we do. In the spiritual values of the true, the good and the beautiful, we have specific goals by means of which we can identify the functioning in us of the spirit.

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Friday, July 26, 1940

When we speak of the Power that makes for salvation, or for righteousness as "not ourselves," we are only partially correct. That phrase is meant to negate the notion of man's being self-sufficient either individually or as genus. That the individual is not self-sufficient is self-evident. Societies of men, however, have tended to regard themselves as self-sufficient, only to learn their error through invasion and war. Should a time ever arrive when it is possible to speak of mankind as so cooperative as to be self-sufficient, the mere fact of its having reached that stage despite the powerfully divisive forces that inhere in individuals and societies would be sufficient proof that it had been brought to that stage by

a power not itself. For the one fact that is certain is that both in the individual and in society the divisive or dehumanizing elements are far stronger than the unifying elements. If the individual is finally led to cooperate, it is because the forces that make for his cooperation reside not only in himself but in society and by their sheer weight cause the divisive forces to yield. The same is true of human groups. But since there is no group in which the unifying forces are inherently greater than the divisive, the ultimate unity of mankind could come about only as the result of unifying forces not altogether inherent in it, in other words, not in itself.

On the other hand, if the phrase "not ourselves" is intended to do more than negate the self sufficiency of man, i.e. actually to exclude him from all participation in that Power, it is false. The very essence of salvation consists in its enabling man to be and possess himself to the fullest degree possible. Were he to be totally passive before he has attained salvation, salvation would be like the outcome of a grant of money by one who has earned it through intelligence and labor to one who possesses no intelligence nor is able to work. He might be helped out by such a grant temporarily but his lot as a person would not be much improved. Salvation can be logically conceived only like the outcome of a grant of money to one who has some degree of intelligence and the ability to work thereby enabling him to activate those powers which he has in common with the one who made that grant to him. Hence the Power that makes for salvation must to some extent inhere also in man. To that extent it is not correct to say of it that it is "not ourselves."

The inherence of this Power in man is actually implied in religion. In religion the term "God" has never had any other than a correlative connotation in that it has always implied man or people to whom he was God. Like the terms king, father, husband the term "God" in the various religions of mankind refers to human beings without whose free acceptance as "God" He could not be such. There are thus two important implications, historically, in the very notion God. One is that godhood has no meaning apart from relationship to man, and the other is that man in the exercise of his freedom accepts God as such. A king however despotic is not a king to his subject unless the subject in his own mind -- i.e. freely -- acknowledges him as such. The same reasoning applies to father and husband. Otherwise they are, insofar as they coerce the will of subject, child or wife respectively merely embodiments of brute force.

In the early history of Jewish religion this correlative character of the concept God is expressed quite clearly. We read frequently about Yahwe's covenant with Israel and his saying that they will be unto Him a people and He will be unto them a God. In the normal expression of Jewish religion, it would be sheer nonsense to say as does the poet (p.198)

It is just as absurd for God to be God without a people or a world as for a king to be a king without a nation. Such an idea of God is the product of the philosophical fallacy which hypostatizes one side of a correlation and treats it as though it were complete entity or process. It was this fallacy which led philosophers and metaphysicians to use the term God as a synonym for Being or Substance.

In later Jewish religion God's actual involvement in man's salvation is brought to the fore by the frequent allusions to the

power which man exercises of either sanctifying or profaning the name of God. The very term "kadosh" it must be remembered, refers to divinity or godhood. When God is represented as saying (p.198) "I shall be sanctified," the only meaning it can have is "I shall be God." To profane God's name means to divest God of His godhood. In rabbinic literature a statement like the comment on

brings out quite clearly to what extent the godhood of God requires man's cooperation.

A much deeper involvement on the part of God in man's salvation is the one conveyed in the various statements in rabbinic literature which represent God as suffering whenever man sins or suffers. These statements which in Jewish religion never assumed any other than a mythological character have their counterpart in Christology which literalizes the conception of God as suffering, and views it as a historical event which was enacted in a historical person.

What emerges from the evidences of this intuitive assumption on the part of the historical religions that the godhood of God is unthinkable without the cooperation of man is not merely that God is both transcendent and immanent but that the transcendence of God is inherently related to His immanence, and that it is not only possible but necessary to have some realization of His transcendence by way of His immanence. In identifying God as the Power that makes for salvation, we have the key to experiencing that immanence. In the will to live that has become self-aware to the extent of choosing among different objectives, and deliberately chooses the life abundant and strives for it, we are experiencing something original and basic in the very structure of reality. We sound the very depths of reality, the very mystery of life -- we behold God. This experience is very definitely a bilateral and not a unilateral transaction, in which there is freedom on the part of man, and creation on the

part of God. Creation is God exercising His freedom. In his freedom man exercises his creativity.

Accordingly the first affirmation we can make concerning God is that He is the Power of creation in reality. This is not to be understood in the usual metaphysical sense of His having brought the world into existence out of nothing. The entire conception of creatio ex nihilo is one concerning which there is much confusion, because of the various connotations which it has to the different people who make use of it. Originally the human mind was as unable to grasp the concept "nihil" as it was any abstract concept without ascribing to it some kind of materiality. Thus even "nothingness" was a kind of substance. When therefore we read in Genesis that God created the world, the implication is that he created out of nothing. But what the author's conception of nothing was, we learn in the second sentence where we are told that it was "tohu vobahu." Likewise when we are told in MaccII that created the world out of nothing we must not imagine that the author was as aware of the problem of "creatio ex nihilo" as was Aristotle or Maimonides. The medieval theologians were very much concerned with that problem, because they felt that the Aristotelian assumption of matter as eternal precluded the miracles which could be accounted for only on the theory that God had created matter. As they viewed the issue, it sounds unreal to us, because we do not believe in the occurrence of the miracles on other than metaphysical grounds. But if we can manage to view that issue symbolically, it can denote for us the attempt to express the fact that the very concept creation does not belong to the category of "nature" or the "natural" where only necessity obtains.

Factually, the human mind arrived at the notion of development long after it was aware of creation. Insofar as it viewed everything in nature as acting from personal motives cognate to its own/projected its own power of origination of action into everything in its environment. Whatever mind there exists in the subhuman acts as if it assumed like mind in whatever it comes in contact with. The first intimations of necessity is the ananke of the Greeks. In the conception of nature as developed by the Stoics we have almost the concept of necessity fully developed. This means that the human mind or the principal of creation in man has only recently arrived at the principle of necessity. Does it seem plausible to set up the concept of necessity, the discovery of which is itself a creative act of the mind as the very antithesis of creativity? Empirical experience actually belies such a conclusion. For the very discovery of the necessity in nature has opened up infinite vistas to the creative spirit in man. If man as possessor of freedom can enlarge the scope of his freedom through the very recognition of the necessity of nature, it seems likely that God as creator can give His creativity its infinite scope by virtue of His having created the necessity of nature. Creation and necessity are the two poles of God's being.

Where in this conception of God is the place of evil? It is not in necessity but in the creativity of God. Evil is not (as I formerly believed) mere chance or negation, but something very real. It would not be evil if it were mere negation of being. All evil may be reduced either to the destruction or lowering of life. It is the antithesis of life, and in man, of salvation. The first is physical; the latter is moral evil. The cruelty which pervades the whole of animal creation and which is referred to in the description

of nature as "red in tooth and claw," is evil in as ontological a sense as is the good of any act of kindness, and it is folly to try to explain it away as mere chance and outside of God. It will not do to follow the example of Job's friends to absolve God of the responsibility for the evil in the world. In the Book of Job, they are rightly condemned for saying the wrong things about God, despite their zeal to formulate a theodicy. What we have to assume with reference to God in order that we may accept His godhood is not that He is without evil, but that He is struggling to free Himself of the evil in His being. The evolutionary process whereby life rises to self-knowledge and to the evaluation of evil is an expression of this divine struggle to overcome the evil it has generated.

But how did God come to harbor evil? The answer to that lies in the fact of God's being creator. All creation is freedom, and freedom implies possibilities of evil as well as of good. Having exercised that freedom as Creator God has created not only good but also evil, not only the motherly love but the beastly hate. In man God as the Power that makes for salvation is God as the Creator of good. But God is also in man the power that hinders his growth and lessens the abundance of his life. Man is thus the arena of God's creative power with the freedom that its exercise implies. In man's efforts to achieve salvation it is also God who seeks to exercise his creative power for good and achieve as it were His own salvation. Cf. comment (p.200)

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Saturday, July 27, 1940

The main question to be answered is: Is a soteric conception of God adequate as a basis of religion, or must it be supplemented by an ontological conception of God assuming that it is possible for the human mind to arrive at such a conception? If I am to maintain

that it is impossible to arrive at an ontological conception of God, as I am inclined to do, I have to make clear that a soteric conception of God is not just pure subjectivity, but has a definite objectivity in its own right.

What has given rise to the foregoing question? In pre-modern thinking there was no reason to distinguish between the soteric and the ontological conception of God. Reality was interpreted entirely from the standpoint of man's salvation. The world was one vast drama in which all the stage properites and everything that took place on the stage involved around the two principal characters, so to speak, God and man. Everything in the whole of reality had a bearing on man's destiny and was therefore adjudged as good or evil. The identity of the soteric and the ontological approach is evident in the traditional way of accounting for the existence of evil. All evil, even that which seems to have no connection with human life, as storms, pestilences and earthquakes which destroy multitudes of lives were ascribed to man's sin. Even the cruelty of jungle beasts and sea monsters was regarded as due to man's having corrupted the whole of nature because he disobeyed the will of God. Man's suffering was unquestionably considered as the penalty of his transgression. When the facts contradicted this last assumption, the belief in the world to come again set matters straight, and the identity of the two approaches, the soteric and the ontological was vindicated once more.

The pre-modern man felt completely oriented. Being oriented is to the mind what harmonious sound is to the ear; it is pleasant. But the ear might get used to discordant noises. The mind, however, cannot long remain disoriented. Its very existence depends upon some degree of orientation. One goes out of one's mind when one is permanently disoriented. To escape that fate, man has to mythologize,

religionize, philosophize. Things have to fall into some kind of a pattern as they do to the eye when it looks at them for a while, and so they have to do also to the mind. Limited knowledge implies noting fewer things or events and therefore seeing them more easily in some kind of pattern. The pre-modern man's knowledge was sufficiently limited to enable him to see a pattern in all that he knew about reality. Before the rise of philosophy, which is the study of being, religion with its soteric view of the world constituted his conception of being. During the middle ages, when there seemed to be a conflict between philosophy and religion or the soteric and the ontological views of the world, men formulated theology in which it was assumed that reason must serve tradition, i.e. that the function of the ontological approach is merely to clarify the soteric. Since then the ontological approach has been supplemented by the scientific and the epistemological approach by the psychologic, and the entire investigation has been pursued independently of the soteric interest. In the meantime the soteric interest has become identified in most people's minds with either nationalism, socialism or a synthesis of both, in which salvation is identified with either power or economic security.

How has this division of labor worked? The present world scene is the answer. Apparently it is not possible to achieve salvation whether we combine it with the wrong ontology, or we dissociate entirely from any ontology whatever. How shall we escape that dilemma? To wait with our efforts for salvation until we have arrived at a satisfactory ontology is out of question, since as time goes on, the views concerning being and knowledge diverge more and more. To hope that out of the clash of national and class of interests there will emerge a plan of salvation that will prove workable is to rely upon a broken reed. The only alternative seems to be that of de-

veloping a science of soterics. Such a science would be based on the universal need for salvation. It would study the various conceptions of it that have been advocated or implied in the different religions, philosophies and social reform movements. It would have to develop its own methodology and gather its own set of facts. It would be what ethics was trying to become a science of human life viewed as a totality. The reason ethics failed to materialize as a science is that it has not made the fact of salvation in all of its deep and far reaching significance its central organizing principle. The ethicists kept themselves aloof from the traditional religions, where their services were most needed. If ethics were to broaden its perspective and to utilize what man has tried to express in his various religious attempts at salvation, it would become the science of soterics. It is futile to try to solve the problem of human life without reckoning with the belief in the existence of a Power, etc.

No doubt soterics would very early in the course of its argument come to a point where it would find itself involved in ontological problems. That point is bound to be the problem of evil. Ontologically there have been the following explanations of evil: 1. It is the consequence of man's disobedience of God; 2. It is the work of Satan or some other anti-God; 3. It is the result of chance; 4. It is the negation of being; 5. It inheres in the very nature of life. It should be the function of soterics to point out that the truth may be with any one of these five theories and that it is advisable that each of us delve to the extent of his ability into the problem of evil and choose whichever solution appeals to him most. This for the sake of being oriented to reality. But (and here is where soterics is to justify its existence) whichever of these solutions he accepts he must integrate it with the belief in the existence of

a Power that makes for salvation. Even on the assumption that evil is due to chance or that it inheres in the very nature of life, it is reasonable to assume the reality of good and of life and of the will to make the most of life. All these are as ontologically real as is evil. They are their own argument for advancing them. In that very fact we assume the existence of a Power that makes for their advancement. That Power may be conceived not as omniscient, omnipotent. Yet should that be a reason for not appealing to it? It certainly is more powerful and knowing than any of us can individually be, or than all of us collectively. Why not avail ourselves of the added confidence, courage and endurance it can give us in the pursuit of the good, of salvation?

The methodology of soterics can be none other than that which the religious mystics (who have refrained from any kind of theurgic mysticism) have been making use of. What religious mystics have really been trying to say is that in order to know the God of religion we must not resort to the methodology of philosophy which is based on the ontological and epistemological approach, but upon deep insight into our basic striving after salvation or deliverance from what we regard as cardinal evil. Approaching the conception of God not from the ontological but from the soteric standpoint, they made statements which seem mystifying, but which, when we know from what viewpoint they were uttered, are perfectly logical and understandable. Thus Berdyaev tells us the following: "Eckhart desdribes the relationships between God and man which are revealed in mystical experience. God exists if man exists. When man disappears, God also will disappear. Before the creature existed, God was not God." God became God only in relation to creation." (Freedom and the Spirit, 194). What Eckhart expressed is actually the same as what we were led to conclude from the fact that God of religion is the Power that makes

for salvation, namely, that the very nature of God consists in that he makes for salvation. Hence to attempt to conceive God apart from his relation to man is like conceiving the idea of fatherhood without taking into account the fact that it expresses relationship to a child.

The methodobgy of soterics would differ radically from that of science and philosophy in that it would be frankly based on the centrality of the human being. This means that it would deal mainly with values. Whatever facts would have to be considered, would be viewed from their value aspect, i.e. from their relation to human

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destiny. Soterics would have to lean on axiology (if there is such a science) but it would differ from axiology in not contenting itself with an objective or neutral attitude to values, but aim to establish a hierarchy of values to live by as a guide to salvation.

Another feature of soteric methodology is protracted contemplation of those facts of one's inner life which come to the surface of consciousness as a result of introspective delving. Thus e.g. the fact of the mind's occupying a position of centrality in its own world should not just be accepted verbally. We should try to experience it at first hand and as we do so ask ourselves what does it mean? Is it objectively true or is it an illusion? We know too much astronomy to assert the former and we know too much epistemology to affirm the latter. If it is neither objective nor illusory, then what is it? It is a creation of the mind. An illusion as such would be sterile, false, useless. The sense of centrality on the other hand is fundamental to the striving for salvation and to its ultimate achievement. We thus experience creativity at first hand.

= Let us go a step further and scrutinize this experience. Despite the fact that this sense of centrality places us at the center of being, giving us the feeling of creating or constructing the environment in which we move and have our own being, there is nothing so evident as that this sense of centrality is not something we arrive at on the basis of experience. It is given to us by a Power not ourselves. While the sense of centrality enables us to create our world, it itself is not part of that creation. In the feeling of its giveness, we experience directly some Power that is not ourselves, but that enters into intimate relation with us in the creation and organization of that world in which we are destined to fulfill ourselves.

The sense of centrality as the creative activity of the mind gives man his world, i.e. it brings unity out of the chaos of his inner and outer life. As he goes on living, his world is continually being upset, and he is always reconstructing it. Whatever helps to restore the unity of man is deeply grateful for. It enables him to pursue his efforts at self-realization. Is it not to be expected that he would ascribe the restoration of the unity to the same Power not ourselves -- however he concieves that Power- which had originally bestowed on him the very ability to create his world? In other words, whatever restores the unity of one's world or confirms one in the feeling of that unity adds meaning to one's life. It renders life worthwhile and significant in that it reenforces the drive to salvation. It is a revelation of that original Power which has bestowed upon man the sense of his own centality and unity of his cosmos. Every creative act of man adds to the meaning of life and is a revelation of the Divine. This is as true a conclusion in soterics as any theorem in geometry, and for the art of life infinitely more essential.

Soterics could develop into a scientific mysticism. As such it would not be intended as a substitute for the historical religions any more than the study of economics is a substitute for the practical conduct of economic relationships. But just as it is the function of economics to interpret and improve economic relationships so it would be the function of soterics to interpret and improve existing historical religions. The application of soterics which is universal to any particular religion or religious civilization would constitute the theology of that religion or civilization.

Every increase in sensitiveness, knowledge and power disrupts the unity of the world, dissolves the meanings of life and hinders the attainment of salvation. It is then that man's creativity is in need of coming into play, to restore unity, reaffirm meanings and reinstate the efforts for salvation. What happens nowadys however is that man exerts his creativity, devises schemes of life, plans of social, economic and spiritual reconstruction as though he alone were the master of his destiny. He seeks to create in detachment from the Power which is the source of his creativity, and sets himself up as god. He becomes self-centered. Whether he create as an individual or as a mass of individuals, rivalry and envy set in and what might have contributed to the unity and meaning of life becomes a factor for disunity and meaninglessness. Thus the finest creations of the human spirit, including religion and social reform set mankind at loggerheads.

"Mysticism," says Berdyaev (ib. 243) is the overcoming of creaturelinss (Kreaturlichkeit). That is the deepest and most intrinsid definition of its nature. "This is made clear by what soterics would regard as its basic fact, viz. man's sense of centrality in the

universe, with its accompanying creative results. The sense of creatureliness implies being anywhere in creation except at the center of it, and being at the opposite pole of creativity. In the light of the experience disclosed by soterics St. Simon the New Theologian is describing something which anyone who practices the introspection called for by soterics could easily identify in himself, when he said "Suddenly He came and united Himself to me in a manner quite ineffable; without any confusion of persons." He entered into every part of my being, as fire penetrates iron or light streams through glass." "How else could the divine fire come down into your heart and burn within it, kindling the affections and uniting it to God, thus elding into an indivisible unit the creature and its Creator." (quoted by Berdyaev p. 244). The same is also true of the following from St. John of the Cross: "This venture has overwhelmed me with happiness: for I was immediately transported into a divine and heavenly state where I held most familiar converse with God, that is to say, my understanding passed from a purely human state to one which was divine. For, in uniting myself to God through this inward purification I have no longer a poor, limited understanding as before. I know now by means of the divine wisdom to which I am united. My will also has surpassed itself and become in a measure divine, for being united to the love of God, it loves no longer in its own strength but in that of the divine Spirit Itself." "The state of union with the divine consists in the complete transformation of the will of the soul into that of God, in such a way that the will of God becomes the only principle and motive underlying all action, as though the Will of God and the will of the soul were but one." The rabbinic saying (p. 205) reads almost like a transcript of this latter statement. The great German mystic Angelus Silerius said "I am as great as God, He as small

I had hoped to start working on the paper which I am expected to read at the convention of the Rabbinical Assembly on "The Place of the Rabbi in American Jewish Life." The fear and tension under which every one labors in view of the Nazi threat to overwhelm the Allies and to challenge this country are enough to stifle all thought that has no bearing on the immediate danger. I have this Finkephobia to overcome. Physically I have been under the weather for the last ten days due to sciatica in my hips. All in all I find myself at present bereft of that very hope and courage which it is my function to instil in others. Yet if men like Churchill and Reynaud can manage to carry on in the face of such national defeats and disasters as are their daily portion, no one worth his salt has a right to give in to such petty troubles and worries as the Seminary has been subjecting me for the last few years, and even to the very real dangers that hang over Jewish life.

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Saturday, June 8, 1940

This morning Lena and I went to the Seminary to attend the baccalaureate services and to be present at the dinner given by Mrs. Adler in honor of the graduates. I had naturally experienced a great deal of inner resistance to going to the Seminary, for seldom do I come away from such occasions without ruffled feelings. But I made up my mind that I would not give in tomyself and submit to whatever humiliation would be meted out to me. The graduation exercises also are an ordeal, but those I have to take part in as a matter of duty. The preliminary exercises, however, I would always manage to stay away from. This time, however, I feel that I want to do nothing to give Finky an opportunity to charge me with keeping aloof. So I simply steeled myself and went. And I must say that I came off better than I had ever expected. There were even no speaches after the dinner, so that no one had any oppor-

as I;" "He who wants God must become God." (All these sayings are from Berdyaev, ibid.) Hillel's saying (p.205)
or the prayer is in the same mystic genre.

The suggestion to formulate a science of soterics does not imply the negation of what is meant to be affirmed by the term "mysticism" namely, that the experience of divinity is necessarily something which cannot fall within any of our rational categories. But if we shall designate any experience as "mysticism" because its content cannot be explained by rational categories, we ought to apply that term to the subject matter of all the sciences. There is nothing that we study carefully without coming up against the most baffling mystery. All that we do in the sciences is simply to record what we observe of the different changes in objects and phenomena and the quantitative aspects of those changes. But we can never get to the inwardness of them. Take e.g. the principle of causality, which until Hume came along and analyzed it away, seemed to be at the very heart of physical phenomena. That has become so discredited that Mach suggested substituting for it the principle of functional relationships. Hence if there is any experience which should be called mystical it should be the content of science. On the other hand if it is true as Berdyev himself says (ibid 247-48) that to live through anything mystically is to live through it spiritually and from within "then what so live through ought hardly to be called mysticism. If anything it ought to be called "illumination" as it is in fact called in Jewish and other traditions. Cf. the terms "Bahir" and "Zohar," for what is so illuminating as knowing anything from within?

What the suggestion of having a science like soterics amounts to is reducing mysticism to a science, Nothing seems at first sight more absurd. What could be more subjective and individual than reporting

on the withinness of what we live through? Is not the very untransferability of the experience an essential part of mysticsm? Do we not associate ineffability with mysticism rather than communicability? This means that we lack the fundamental requisite for reducing it to a science.

Yet upon the examination of the various mystical writings the one fact that stands out clearly is the underlying similarity of the experiences they record. The remarkable circumstance is that this similarity transcends differences of religion and theology. "Orphism and Platinus," says Berdyaev, ib. 244) Hindu mysticism and Sufism, St. Simon the New Theologian and St. John of the Cross, Eckhart and Jacob Boehme, are all in some measure in agreement." He might well have added the Kabbalah. As a matter of fact, if the mystics were to differ among themselves as do the philosophers and theologians there would be as little objective value to mysticism as there is to philosophy and theology. The notion that the inward aspect of reality must present a different face to every individual observer is based on the assumption that only the outer and abstract or devitalized and desicated realities can afford the basis of common understanding. So long as this assumption prevails there never will be a common understanding based on the only aspect of reality that can establish a genuine and permanent likemindedness among human beings, the likemindedness essential to the unity of mankind. This is what mystics and religionists have been trying to express when they say that not in their human interests but only in God can humanity find a permanent basis for cooperation.

Another misconception which has to be cleared up before mysticism can be incorporated in the science of soterics is that to be qualified for mystical experience one has to lead a saintly life, whereas the successful pursuit of a science is determined neither by character

nor saintliness, but by the ability to observe carefully and to be careful in what one infers from his observations. The assumption that saintliness is a prerequisite to mystical experience is based upon the fact that some of the outstanding mystics happened to have been holy men, and that theurgic mysticsm always did set up a holy life as a condition to practicing it. But our concern is only with contemplative mysticism. There have been many mystics in modern times who have led the lives of average standard and if I am not mistaken some even of opprobrious character have displayed a special knack for sensing and recording mystical experience. Hence we do not have to depend upon those rare personalities who combine in themselves both saintliness and the ability to exercise deep and reliable insight into the inward aspects of their lives for material in which to base the science of soterics.

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Monday, July 28, 1940

There is no danger that soterics might lose itself in the dark jungle of occultism and theosophy. As its name implies it is rooted in the will to live the life abundant. For sotericc spirit is that will, which we experience with an immediacy and intimacy that amounts to identification with self. By exploring it and trusting ourselves to it we become aware of freedom and creativity and other aspects of reality which can only be known when reality is viewed from within. Occultism and theosophy on the other hand are the products of the imagination in which the mind does not distinguish between the inner and outer views of reality, between the will to live and the various phantasies, myths and intellectualizations which that will has produced. Out of ahodge-podge of oriental and occidental thought modern theosophy cooks up a new dish and serves it up to the jaded polate of the modern man.

What are we to consider as making for salvation depends upon how we conceive truth, goodness and beauty which are the constituents of what make life worthwhile. In this regard there is a definite departure from the pre-modern way of life. Truth was regarded as fixed, static and timeless and in its own nature completely actualized. As against this view the modern man has come to regard truth as unfolding, becoming, revealing and actualizing hitherto unrealized potentialities. Goodness was regarded as obedience to eternal and unchangeable law. It now is viewed as the creative fulfillment of freedom. Without freedom there can be no goodness. Except among the ancient Greeks, the spiritual meaning of beauty was unknown to the ancients. It is now recognized as indispensable to the attainment of the spiritual life. Dostovesky is quoted as having said that beauty will save the world. Of course that is an exaggeration Its value, however, is in counteracting the disregard of form. Truth and goodness pertain to the substance of life. It is to the latter mainly that the ancients gave all their attention, leaving form to take care of itself. The Greeks made the remarkable discovery that substance and form are so integrally related that both must receive attention if we want life to achieve its full measure of perfection. Hence the spiritual significance of beauty, that is, its indispensability to salvation.

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Wednesday, July 31, 1940

Richard Cabot's "What Men Live By" (?) is an attempt to formulate a system of soterics, though he does not realize fully the implications of his own effort. The four things men live by, according to him, are work, play, love and worship. "God and the Common Life" by Robert Calhoun comes nearer to what soterics ought to be in that he senses the significance of work or vocation as life-

fulfillment for the understanding of what God means in human life. But his book suffers from two defects. One is the identification (which he is not fully aware of) of salvation with vocation is based on too narrow a conception of salvation. The other is the failure to derive the conception of God from the concept salvation as such. All he does is to draw an analogy between the conception of God which he thinks is metaphysical and the essential aspects of vocation.

Salvation as life abundant is realized by the human being through vocation, progency and the utilization of excess function in play, art and worship.

It seems incredible that despite all that has been said and written about the purpose and meaning of human life, and all the theologies, philosophical and ethical systems which have been constructed, we are still lacking a simple and concrete statement as to what can help us find or make human life worthwhile for ourselves and others. In Greek thinking the goal of human life is defined in such abstract terms as happiness, perfection, harmony, or God-likeness. In rabbinic Judaism the goal of life is a share in the world to come. In Christianity it is immortal bliss in the hereafter. Modern ethical systems have merely been reiterating what the Greek thinkers said on the subject. The habit acquired from Greek thought to look for or to be satisfied with the essence of a matter is largely responsible for the little progress made in our coming to an understanding as to what should constitute the goal of all our strivings.

The importance of coming to such an understanding cannot be over-estimated. Unless we agree on what is to make life worthwhile living, on that which absolutely indispensable to us as human beings, from the standpoint of our physical, mental and social health -- in other words on what is to constitute for us salvation, we are bound to be at cross purposes in all our efforts to improve our lot whether in-

dividually or collectively. Assuming that we agree to regard this earth as the scene for the achievement of salvation, we should do our profoundest and most strenuous thinking on the question: What shall we set up as the goal of human striving? Unless we agree on what that goal is to be, it is inconceivable that we shall ever get very far with ever learning how to live or to get on with one another. All the schemes of social reform from the most moderate to the most radical make the same mistakes as the historical religions in conceiving salvation essentially as something negative, i.e. as emancipation from some cardinal evil, which is the root of all other evils. Instead of sin, the social reformers regard poverty as such an evil. There can be no question that it is infinitely more realistic to identify salvation with emancipation from poverty or from economic insecurity than it is to identify it with emancipation from sin and death. But they forget that while economic security, or at least a fair measure of it is indispensable to salvation, it is far from enough. By itself it is only one of many indispensable constituents of salvation. If made the sole objective of social change it is liable to bring new evils that replace the old, and the human being is as far from salvation as ever. Hence, if we really wish to contribute toward the betterment of man's lot in this world we must strive for basic agreement upon what we should all consider as the essentials to worthwhile living or salvation.

The principal implication of the thesis that God is the Power - not ourselves - that makes for salvation is a twofold one: 1) We cannot understand the meaning of the concept "God" apart from we conceive as salvation, and 2) we cannot understand what salvation means apart from the belief in God. That it should be difficult to associate any concrete meaning with the term "God" out of its context in salvation

is what we might expect, since "God" is an abstract concept, and we generally realize that no abstract concept is experienced as an existential reality apart from the concrete substance of experience. But why should the understanding of salvation presuppose the belief in God?

When we analyze the idea of salvation, or the actual experience of the will-to-live the abundant life, we note a conscious awareness of a disparity between what is and what ought to be. Whether salvation means the overcoming of a cardinal evil or the attainment of a cardinal good, the very experience of it presupposes an awareness of the disparity between what is and what ought to be, if life is to be worthwhile. But the fact that a certain situation is regarded as one that ought (by right, or morally) to exist indicates that it could be, for what is beyond the range of possibility could not be considered as something that ought to be. In short, what ought to be can be. If it can be it is because the conditions in the environment both physical and mental-social are capable of bringing about the situation that ought to be. Thus the will-to-live the abundant life presupposes the possibility of its realization, in the same way as the will-to-live in general is inconceivable without factors in the environment favorable to life. This is the ontological argument (first formulated by Anselm) applied to salvation, where it rightly belongs. What Anselm did was to project it into the belief in God, where Kant's criticism of it is justified. The ontological argument is valid when applied to the will to live. The sex instinct is a correct ontological argument for the existence of a mate. The migratory instinct is likewise a correct ontological argument for the existence of a southland. Neither of these instincts would have any meaning without the existence of the realities needed for their realization. Likewise the will to salvation would be meaningless without the assumption that

the world is so constituted as to make for salvation. To believe that about the world is to believe in God.

The belief in the God of religion is arrived at intuitively by the masses of mankind entirely by way of their absorbing interest in salvation. If they speak of supernatural miracle and revelation as the source of their knowledge of God, it is only because their limited knowledge of nature both physical and mental is such as to lead them to interpret what they conceive as factors of salvation as lying outside the range of their ordinary experience. When the traditional idea of God is no longer acceptable, what really happens is either they have changed their notions concerning what they had been wont to regard as factors of salvation, or those factors no longer lie outside the range of normal experience. Instead of re-adjusting their notion of salvation and making corresponding changes in the conception of God, they abandon the belief in God altogether. The reason they do so is that they regard the traditional belief in God as the source of the traditional conception of salvation instead of the reverse.

If, however, we can manage to repeat in the modern universe of discourse the process of arriving once more at the belief in God by way of a conception of salvation that we must live by, for life is to have meaning for us, then we shall come into possession of a conception of God which is not anemic, which is not merely a thin formula or word play, but one which has body and vigor. It will not be the kind of God who is an "unmoved mover," the first Cause derivable by way of the principle of sufficient reason, who can no more be worshipped than one can worship a geometrical axiom. In fact the main trouble with the conception of God which purports to be arrived at by way of abstract logical reasoning is not that it offers a pale reflection of the God of religion, but that itself is likely to be called

into question. The principle of sufficient reason is based on the assumption that causability is an ontological force in dependent of the human mind, and that such force inherently operates between two events one of which is considered the cause and the other the effect. Actually, however, causality is nothing more than either a construct or form of the mind, a kind of useful myth, which enables the mind to hold together its experiences in a frame of reference.

To give at the present time motive force to the belief in God, it is necessary to elaborate on what we have come to view as the constituents of salvation, viz: vocation, progeny and the utilization of excess function in play, art and worship, and on what we consider as the conditions making for these elements of salvation. As such conditions we have come to recognize health, intelligence, freedom (autonomy), justice, cooperation (love). Truth, goodness and beauty are the criteria which determine to what extent these conditions further salvation.

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Thursday, August 1, 1940

The fallacy in the mystic approach to the conception of God is that it tends to ignore the otherness of the Power that makes for salvation. The mystic approach exploits to the full the will to live the life abundant as a means of identifying the Power that cooperates with it and experiencing its reality. In that respect it is on the right track. But it is so pre-occupied with the experience of godhood that it forgets that mere communion with godhood does not by itself make for the fulfillment of the will to live. There are conditions that have to be met before the will to live can avail itself of the sustenance and strength afforded by the Power that is God. These conditions consist of the entire complex of reality which we speak of as the natural order and which is technically spoken of as

"secondary causes."

The fallacy in the metaphysical approach to the conception is that it ignores the will to live as a source of our knowledge of God. God thus is entirely otherness. The only way in which any rapprochement between God and man can be effected is through the medium of the natural order or the "secondary causes." So long as the thinkers who fostered the metaphysical approach were under the domination of traditional and organized religion, they projected into their conception of God the connotations of religious experience which was based on the will to salvation. But when they freed themselves from that domination God either became synonimous with nature, as in the case of Spinoza and the 19th century idealistic philosophers, or the very concept of God was found superfluous.

Historically, the mystic approach to the conception of God is ascribed to the influence of Plato, and the metaphysical to Aristotle. The former is said to have stressed the immanence the latter the transcendnece of God.

The soterical approach which is here advocated would effect a synthesis of the mystic and the metaphysical approaches minus their fallacies. It would insist on making the will to salvation as it is inwardly experienced the source of our belief in God, and by the method of analogy from that inner experience formulate various working by potheses concerning the functioning of godhood. But it would at the same time not content itself with the mere contemplation of godhood. It would insist upon the actual achievement of salvation, which experience has well demonstrated cannot take place without knowledge of goals and means. Godhood does not bring about directly the fulfillment of the will to salvation. There are conditions to be met, laws to be reckoned with.

What are these laws? Traditional religion did not hesitate for an answer. Whatever tradition prescribed was the will of God. It presumably stated the conditions that had to be met in order that the Power that makes for salvation shall permit His godhood to bring about its fulfillment. In the meantime other facts and laws were discovered to be far more effective and essential for the achievement of salvation. In fact the traditional conception of salvation itself has been found to be in need of complete revision. But whatever the revision of our notion of salvation, the will to salvation is ineradicable. Whatever the conditions that have to be met, it is not the conditions as such that can effect salvation, but the Power behind them -- God or godhood -- that is to the cosmos what self or selfhood is to the human body.

As for the conditions and laws which traditional religion upholds as the requirements that have to be met, if salvation is to be achieved, many of them will undoubtedly be found to be the same which actual experience has proved to be essential. This applies especially to the ethical precepts and laws. The ten commandments and the laws which prescribe the love of God and of our neighbor have been more than vindicated by the catastrophes which have come upon the human race because they were violated. But the problem is with ritual observances. The answer to that should not be difficult. If those observances have acquired meanings which experience has demonstrated as having intrinsic value in that they can contribute to salvation, they should not only be retained, but also interpreted in such way as to bring that value to the fore of consciousness. The Sabbaths and festivals suggest themselves as the principal illustrations of ritual observance that should be thus dealt with.

What makes soterics possible nowadays with its synthesis of the truth in both the mystic and the metaphysical approach is the fact that in modern times there is not only greater knowledge of the inexorable character of the secondary causes as well as of infinitely more details than was possessed by the pre-moderns but that this augmented knowledge has increased a thousandfold man's power to change and improve his environment, and even if he really wanted, his own character. This ability which man possesses to manipulate nature or the laws and conditions that have to be lived up to, if he is to achieve salvation, enables the communion with godhood to be more than contemplation. It makes possible the action that is needed for the achievement of salvation. On the other hand, the laws and conditions through which God operates on human life, instead of constituting a means of keeping God remote from human life actually help to establish His nearness.

How shall we determine what constitutes salvation? If it is to mean the maximum of life that the human being is capable of developing in this earthly milieu, we must reckon with the fundamental tendencies of human nature and plan with them instead of against them. The human being is an animal, plus. The traditional religions have, as a rule, not only differentiated sharply between the animal and the plus in man, but have even set one against the other. This they did because of their fear, largely justified, that the animal in man might devour his plus. But in the past while they did not altogether succeed, neither did they altogether fail. In modern times they stand no chance of succeeding because of man's radically different orientation nowadays to the animal and the plus in him. If he is to achieve the life abundant, he must proceed on entirely different lines.

As animal the human being is impelled by two imperious wants, the want of sustenance and shelter and the want to mate. As plus, the human being wants, or is selfhood. If instead of setting up the plus want against the animal wants, the plus want is permitted to organize the animal wants in such a way as to have them elicit latent powers of mind -- of memory and intelligence, and of heart ~~00~~ of sensitiveness and imagination, two things are bound to happen. One is the opening up of greater vistas of life, and the other is greater capacity to occupy and cultivate them. Life becomes more abundant, and the will to live it more intensive. So that as animal plus man has not only the will to live in common with all other creatures, but also the will to live the life abundant or the will to salvation.

Under the impact of the will to selfhood, the will to sustenance and safety and the will to mating are broadened in the scope of their activities and deepened in their reach into latent human capacities of mind and cooperation. The will to sustenance and safety becomes organized into one's calling or vocation. The will to mating becomes organized into the yearning for physical and spiritual progeny. By this enlargement and intensification of the two primal wants the self expects to extend and perpetuate itself and thus achieve greater quantity and finer quality of life.

But man is endowed with a superabundance of energy, especially mental. He cannot use up all of it in the pursuit of his vocation or in the maintenance of family and supporting social aggregates. These energies are subject to what has been termed "excess functioning." Unless this excess functioning is drained off into channels where it can add to the satisfaction derived from the animal and the plus wants, it is likely to become a source of mischief. This excess functioning normally finds an outlet in play, artistry and worship.

In present day religious writings there prevails a tendency which is bound to make for confusion rather than clarity of thought. That is the tendency to interpret a particular historical religion as though it were religion in general. It is perfectly proper to speak of the need of so interpreting Judaism or Christianity as to render it capable of contributing to the task of social reconstruction. To proceed with their interpretation at the urge of a particular contingency means reinterpreting them, i.e. deliberately introducing certain changes into the historical religions that would enable them to meet that contingency. But religion as such is a universal phenomenon. The reinterpretation of a phenomenon cannot take place at the bidding of some practical necessity. It can take place only as a result of newly discovered facts which have made the old interpretation untenable. For religion as such to be in need of reinterpretation would imply the existence of some standard interpretation. That is not the case. Each religion has hitherto presented itself as the only true religion and the others as counterfeit. There ought indeed to be a science of religon, but if it is to be something more than an abstract study of the idea of God, either metaphysically or historically, it would have to include the study of human conduct from its natural and ethical standpoint. Such a science of religion would have to be soterics.

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Friday, August 2, 1940

Soterics would effect the very much needed Copernican revolution in our religious thinking. Despite the progress in the general understanding of the way the human mind works and the clearer realization that ideas do not initiate life or will, but only help to direct and improve it, most of the thinkers about religion proceeds nonchalantly as though the idea of God initiated civilization, courage, love, reason,

truth, goodness, beauty and what not. This is how Santayana, Hocking Lyman and others argue. We shall make little headway in the understanding and improvement of religion and even less in the integration of it into life, so long as we shall be dominated by the intellectualist fallacy. (It will be necessary at this point to explain that abandoning the intellectualist fallacy does not necessarily mean abandoning faith in the existence of absolute truth and reason.) It is true that making the will central in the functioning of the mind has led many psychologists and sociologists and even philosophers to the denial of absolute truth; this denial is the main weakness in Dewey's instrumentalism. But one does not have to go the whole length with Dewey to realize that the instrumentalist view of ideas is indispensable not to the attainment of the truth concerning reality, but to the understanding of the way the human mind works and of the various human institutions which govern human life. Who, for example, would now venture the opinion that barter, family life, national life, etc. began with general ideas concerning their aim, method and means? Why should it be different with religion or the conception of God? Is it not much more understandable nowadays that human beings first came upon their way of living instinctively and haphazardly and as they proceed to apply their powers of mind they crystallize their thinking into general ideas, and with the aid of those ideas change their ways and habits or give them new meanings and therefore new functions? To be sure the first emergences of ideas or expressions of self-awareness generally refer to some extra-human or super-human relationship and may be regarded as religious. It is in that religious form that they then operate to enhance human life in all its aspects. But that does not mean that it is their religious form as such that makes them factors for enhancement of human life. Their idea content enables them to help human life.

But even their idea content would not have come into play had there not been back of it the will to live life abundantly. As one idea-content after another, whether religious or not, whether referring to super-human beings or to other factors and agencies, proves to be ineffective in helping man achieve the life abundant, man gradually approximates what is absolute truth. (This is the case not necessarily because only what makes for life is true. We have to accept on faith this congruence of truth and life) It is not religion or the idea of God that enables us to bear the worst that can befall us and to do the best of which we are capable, but the will-to-achieve the maximum life. It is apparent that we could hardly get very far with life if we would not put forth the maximum of our energies, if we were not prepared to endure hardships or to display courage in the face of difficulties and danger, and if our spirits would be broken by frustration, suffering or loss. Reason, love, endurance and courage open up new areas of living and qualify us to cultivate them. To give reason, love, endurance and courage a place in our orientation we naturally see them as part of a unitary world design. And seeing them thus we express our insight as belief in a Power, not ourselves, that reveals itself through them to us. Our very will to live is no more only our own or is only ourselves than the beating of our hearts. How the not-self and the self manage to unite or suffuse each other is an ineffable mystery. Likewise the very endurance, courage, reason and love is not ours only, but belongs also to the Power not ourselves.

In the light of the foregoing, salvation or maximum life is attained when in the pursuit of our vocation, in the achievement of progeny, and in the utilization of excess functioning we display endurance, courage, reason and love. The conditions which make for the

attainment of salvation thus understood are intelligence, justice, freedom and cooperation. These are environmental and social attributes and the criteria by which we can recognize and appraise them are truth, goodness and beauty. These are the absolutes which the human mind assumes and seeks to approximate.

Also in the light of the foregoing how readily we can understand the following from Bernard's De Siligendo Deo (quoted in The Medieval Mind by H. O. Taylor, Vol. I, p. 425) "We must sometimes pass into that state wherein we do not wish to be ourselves or anything else, except for His sake and by reason of His will, not ours. O holy love and chaste! O sweet affection! O pure and purged intention of the will (note his identification of the will) in which nothing of its own is mingled!. This is to be made good (deificari) As the drop of water is diffused in the jar of wine taking its taste and color, and as molten iron becomes like to fire and casts off its form, and as the air transfused with sunlight is transformed into that same brightness of light so that it seems not illumined, but itself to be the light, thus in the saints every human affection must in some ineffable mode be liquified of itself and transfused into the will of God. How could God be all in all if in man anything of man remained? A certain substance will remain, but in another form, another glory, another power."

Reason is the repudiation of all such external aids and authorities in the effort to come to terms with reality as refuse to surrender their externality and authority and to become one with one's own free and unconstrained forces of the mind. So free from constraint must these inner forces be, when reason is awake and active that no less repugnant than the yoke of outward aids and authorities is the pressure upon it of impulse or desire. Reason is that transparent

honesty of the mind that will not bear the taint of distortion or illusion however comforting it be to one's legitimate or illegitimate wishes. In reason, selfhood in all its virginal dignity and self-possession unmoved by any extrinsic or ulterior considerations asserts its prerogative to judge and appraise all it sees and hears, the testimony of the senses as well as of tradition. To reason no truth is truth unless it is submitted to this kind of judgment and appraisal. Well did Milton say in the Areopagica (II, 431) "A man may be an heretic in the truth, and if he believes things only because his pastor says so...the very truth he holds becomes his heresy." (quoted by E. W. Lyman - The Meaning of Truth of Religion, p.36).

But at once the problem presents itself. If in reason the full free individuality of the mind is to asssrt itself, what likelihood is there that human beings will ever coalesce into a cooperative society? Does not all cooperation involve submitting to the wisdom and authority of the one or the few who can impose their will on the rest? Are not human beings so diverse in their unconstrained thinking that it would be utopian to allow the individual reason to have its way? Yet is there not something in reason itself that might enable it to meet these objections? Reason, after all, is the very antithesis of the kind of individuality which is unique and unrepeated. On the contrary, it is the free and unconstrained effort of the individual to discover that truth about reality which might serve as a common mental and spiritual denominator among all thinking individuals. It is impulse, emotion, will that divides. The only hope of human beings achieving permanent unity is the extent to which each will habituate himself in thinking rationally, for only thus do human beings emancipate themselves from what divides them.

Thus does our selfhood transcend itself through the exercise of reason as it does through the exercise of endurance, courage and love. It becomes aware, through its very freedom, of a universal necessity which instead of conflicting with its own freedom renders it capable of being realized in full. Endurance and courage accentuate individuality in its contrast to sociality. That contrast is much needed when the life of the community tends to destroy the hope of salvation, in order that the individual shall not be swamped. But reason like love points to the possibility of men's ultimately finding a way of cooperating in behalf of the good life and salvation. The ground for such possibility is the fact that insofar as men possess the power of reason they possess the ability to divest themselves of that which divides them, and to discover what unites them. The cooperation of men on the basis of reason will issue in the establishment of just law.

Just laws are those which do away with the necessity of war as a means of deciding between conflicting interests. Until modern times wars could be carried on on a scale which did not involve directly the fate of the whole of mankind. But war has now assumed such colossal proportions and is inflicting such far reaching havoc that the inhabitants of the entire earth are involved. This fact means that every community however small has a stake in the abolition of war. It can no longer absolve itself of the responsibility of being a factor for either war or peace. To the extent that it permits unjust laws and institutions to exist, laws and institutions that unnecessarily (from the standpoint of actual resources prevent large numbers to lead frustrated lives, it is preventing the solution of the problem of war. The only way that a community can ever get to the point of enacting just laws, and thus becoming a factor for peace, is through the cultivation of reason as the basic principle